



Learning in lockdown

Results from Amaze's Term 3 School Experience Survey
September 2020

Term 3 School Experience Survey: Headline Results

Survey details:

312 responses from families of autistic students in Victorian schools were received. About 75% have autistic children attending government schools. Over three-quarters are enrolled in mainstream schools.

Pre-Covid19 snapshot:

Half report their child receives funding under the *Program for Students with Disability*, however there is widespread uncertainty about the status and level of PSD funding, and how it is being used.

Most families reported their child received some level of adjustments to support their learning needs prior to schooling being disrupted. However, a sizeable proportion (15-27% depending on setting) received no adjustments pre-Covid19.

Many autistic students do not have an Individual Education Plan: 25% in government metro schools and 30% in regional schools report having no IEP. A majority do not have Student Support Groups.

Attendance during Term 3:

A small proportion of autistic students in metro Melbourne are currently schooling on-site (6.8% all schools; 5.5% government). Some are combining on-site and remote learning. Over three-quarters of autistic students in metro Melbourne are exclusively learning from home.

Different policy settings have seen higher on-site attendance in regional Victoria: 15% on site exclusively; some combining on-site/remote learning and just over two-thirds are exclusively learning at home.

While we didn't ask about **disengagement from school**, in the comments received many indicated their child is not currently doing any schooling.

Support during Term 3:

Around one-third of families have not been contacted by their children's school to discuss their individual circumstances and support needs in Term 3 (41.4% in metro government schools).

Many families report support in Term 3 has not met their child's needs – 40% metro (45% government metro); 34.4% regional.

Personalised support for those undertaking remote learning has been highly variable. For those receiving it, support has included:

- Differentiated/modified curriculum (38.9% metro; 35.5% regional);
- Personalised/small group contact with education aides (34% metro, 19.4% regional);
- Individualised meetings with teachers (24.6% metro, 21% regional);

- Adjustments to teaching approach (15.3% metro; 22.6% regional); and
- Sessions with Student Support Services staff (5.4 % metro; 16.1% regional).

Of those with Individual Education Plans, the majority have NOT had plans updated since late March. Of those with Student Support Groups, over a third report the group has NOT met since late March.

Around one third of children are receiving NDIS supports, around 15% are accessing informal supports, and 10% have used tutors to support home learning.

Return to on-site schooling:

There is a very high desire to return to on-site learning.

Over 90% of respondents reported their autistic child went back to school in late Term 2, but low levels of transition support were provided to support their return.

A majority of those with children enrolled in metro government schools reported their autistic child attended on-site schooling when given the option during the first few weeks of Term 3.

Almost half of metro families want their autistic children to return to on-site schooling before most other students return. However, around 8% (9% in government schools) say their child is unlikely to return to on-site schooling while community transmission of coronavirus exists, indicating the need for prolonged remote learning for some.

Significant adverse impacts are resulting from school disruptions:

- Over two-thirds report their child's mental health and wellbeing has declined
- Around half report their child's learning has not progressed

Return to school supports that parents believe would help their autistic child include:

- Mental health and wellbeing supports (66% metro; 71% regional);
- Over 80% want some or improved personalised modifications / adjustments;
- Targeted catch up support was identified by over half of metro and two thirds of regional respondents;
- Assistance to help re-connect with peers (64% metro; 57% regional).
- The opportunity to undertake an additional term or semester, or even repeat the year (21.8% metro; 25% in regional). Concerns around transitions – especially for children at special schools in their final years was high; and

Many families are not confident to approach their school to discuss their child's support needs (over a third in metro; over 40% regional).



Reforms for Students with Disability are needed immediately; as schools re-open and in longer term

Immediate improvement to remote & flexible learning:

1. Establish a standard of support for students with disability learning remotely including minimum requirements around access to Education Support Staff and personalised learning adjustments.
 - Changes to industrial arrangements are needed to allow Education Support Staff to assist children in their home, particularly for students with medical complexities that are likely to need to continue learning from home while there is a risk of community transmission of COVID-19.
2. Ensure all students with disability (receiving funded support or not) have a functioning Student Support Group which can meet virtually and an updated Individual Education Plan to address the impacts of covid19 disruptions.
3. Provide targeted outreach to students with disability absent from remote learning and develop tailored plans to support their re-engagement.
 - Broaden eligibility criteria for the Navigator program to enable timely re-engagement support.
4. Strengthen remote access to mental health and wellbeing support.
 - Student Support Services need to connect remotely, prioritising those exhibiting wellbeing concerns. The recently announced expansion of mental health practitioners in schools – including introducing them into senior specialist schools - ought to be immediately leveraged.

Targeted measures as restrictions ease:

5. Prioritise students with disability for return to on-site learning at both mainstream and specialist schools.
6. Provide a disability targeted response for specialist schools including additional staff training, access to effective PPE, strengthened processes in infection control in schools and on buses. Consider basing infection control experts in schools.

7. Assess extent to which students with disability have fallen behind during schooling disruptions and develop specific disability adjusted catch-up support, e.g.: additional intensive sessions.
8. Strengthen access to mental health and wellbeing support to support transitions back to school and address impacts of schooling disruptions.
9. Provide students with disability opportunities for an additional term or semester or repeating a year. This is particularly important for students in transition, including those undertaking their final year in specialist schools.

Fast-track systemic reforms:

10. Implement all recommendations from the Program for Students with Disability Review including a new funding and support model, inclusion measures, behaviour support and strengthened staff capacity.
11. Introduce ambitious targets and transparent measures to lift the education attainment & wellbeing of students with disability.
12. Fast track completion of the education strategy for autistic students – committed in Dec 2017. Exceptionally poor educational outcomes for autistic students underscore the urgency of this.
13. Strengthen understanding of and compliance with the Disability Standards for Education. These need to be significantly overhauled in the upcoming review.

These recommendations have been co-developed by Amaze and the Association for Children with a Disability



Survey results in detail

About the survey

As Victoria struggles with the Coronavirus pandemic, schools, school students and their families have had to rapidly adapt to the changing environment.

This survey undertaken by autism peak Amaze was designed to hear about the experiences of autistic students during Victoria's second lockdown in Term 3. For most of Term 3, metropolitan Melbourne has faced Stage 4 Restrictions, and regional Victoria Stage 3 Restrictions. The overwhelming majority of students, including autistic students, have been learning from home.

Parents of autistic students in Prep through to Year 12 in metropolitan Melbourne and regional schools were the target of the survey. We heard about the experiences of autistic students from government, independent and catholic schools, in mainstream and specialist school settings.

A total of 312 responses were received over 5 days of the survey being conducted online (late Aug-early Sep). Metro school areas received 244 responses while regional areas generated 68 responses.

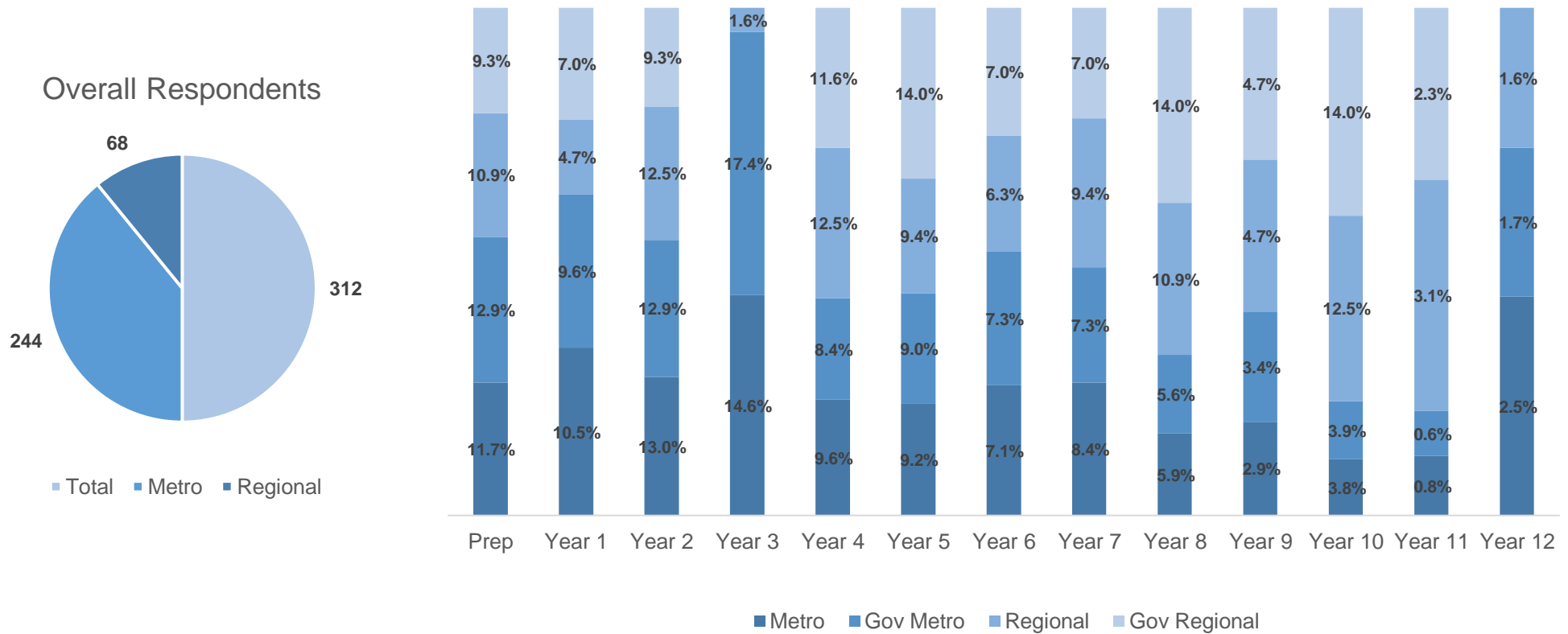
It builds on a similar survey undertaken by Amaze during Victoria's first lockdown which interrupted much of Term 2.

We are deeply grateful to those families who invested their time and energy to complete the survey – a big ask given the immense stress and uncertainty of the times. The quotes in this report are the direct and unfiltered words of parents and carers of autistic school students. We thank respondents for their candour and courage. We warn readers that some of the results and comments included in this report may cause distress.

These survey results are designed to inform policy and practice reforms to support autistic student and their families while remote learning continues, as on-site schooling resumes, and to aid recovery from schooling disruptions caused by the pandemic.

We heard from families across Victoria and all year levels

Parents of autistic students in Prep through to Year 12 in Victorian metropolitan and regional schools were the target of the survey. This included autistic students from government, independent and catholic school sectors, in mainstream schools and specialist school settings. Of the total 312 responses received, metro school areas made up 244 responses while regional school areas delivered 68 responses.

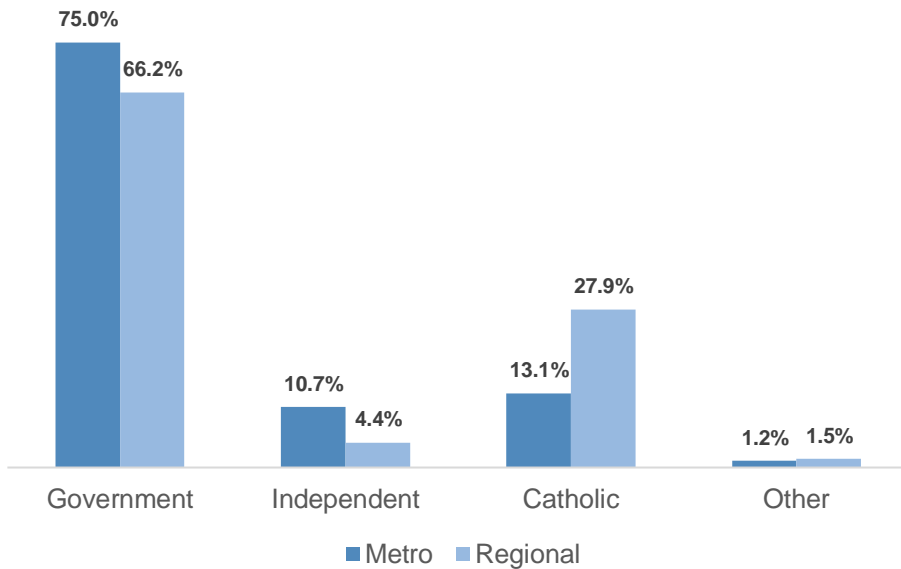


We heard from families across different school sectors and settings

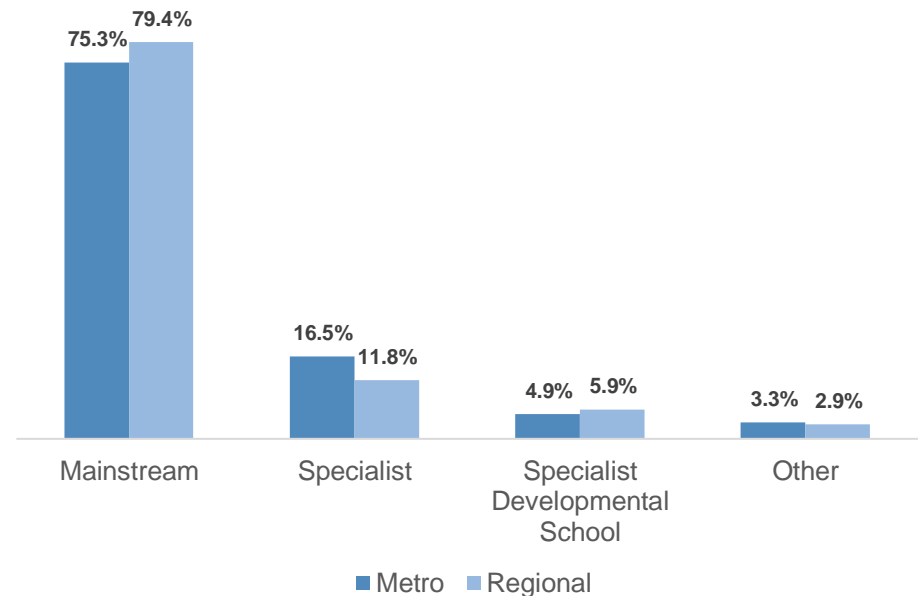
Parents of students with disability from government schools made up the largest respondents overall, as did those from mainstream schools. This generally reflects broader school enrolment demographics of autistic students.

Around half of respondents indicated their autistic child is receiving funding under the Program for Students with Disability, although there was widespread uncertainty about the status and level of PSD funding, and how it is being used. 44.5% of metro and 51.5% of regional respondents are not attracting PSD Funding for their child.

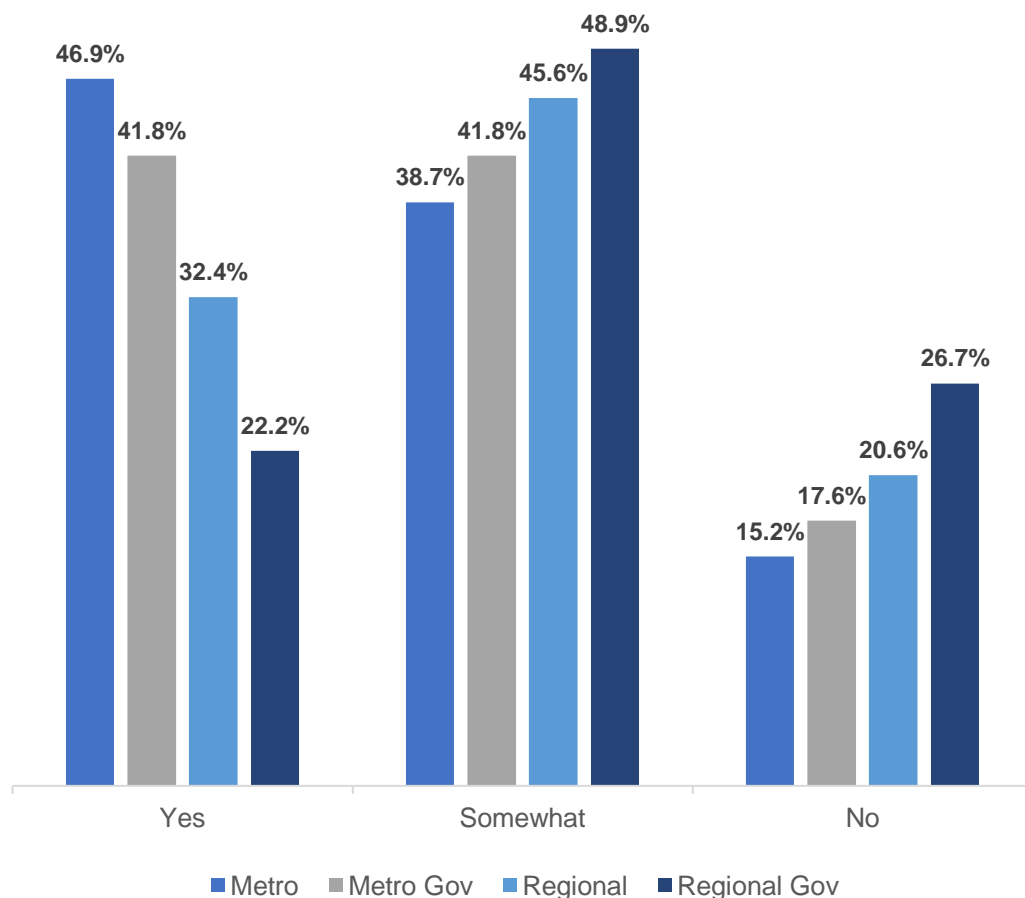
School Sectors



School Types



Prior to schooling being disrupted in late March, did the school make adjustments to help your child function well at school?



Most parents expressed that schools had adjustments – at least to some extent – in place to support their child’s learning prior to schooling being disrupted by the pandemic. Metro schools fared better than regional. Non-government schools received higher ratings from parents.

A sizeable proportion of parents reported their child received no adjustments pre-pandemic: 20.6% from regional and 15.2% from metro schools. Government schools fared worst with over a quarter of respondents from regional and 17.6% of parents from metro government schools reporting no adjustments.

“Classroom teacher makes adjustments and is fantastic.”

“Leadership, particularly the wellbeing and student engagement leader, has done nothing to support our child, even after requests.”

“The school is very responsive.”

“Left the school he was at due to poor adjustments.”

“The school has been restricting my child’s school hours since the beginning of prep, as the principal feels my child is incapable of learning.”

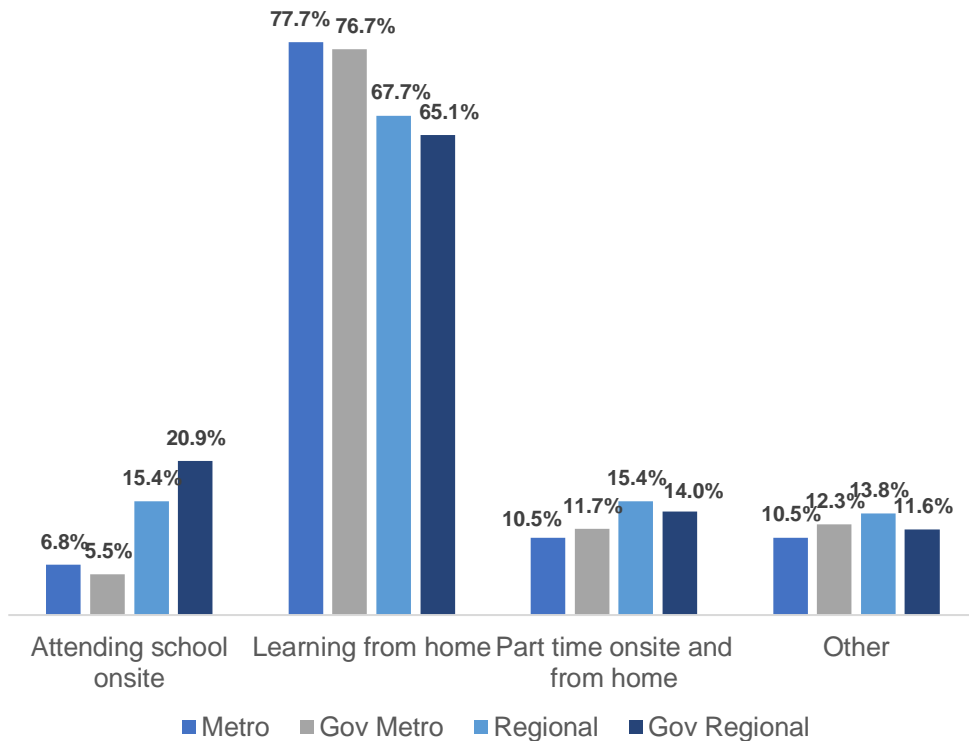
“His teacher has been understanding and tried multiple things to assist and engage.”

“Child’s teacher doesn’t “see” any issues, so she seems to disregard adjustments discussed in PSG meetings.”

How is your child currently undertaking their schooling?

Over three-quarters of metro school students have been exclusively learning from home during most of Term 3. A small percentage are primarily on-site, reflecting tight eligibility criteria, a larger group are doing a combination of home and on-site schooling. Schools' practices around allowing on-site attendance appear to be highly varied.

Regional Victoria, where there is a broader option for students with disability to attend in person, has considerably higher numbers of students on site either part or full time. Gatekeeping by schools seems to have resulted in some students being turned away, despite being eligible to attend. Around two-thirds of regional autistic students are currently learning exclusively from home.



"I have felt that the (regional Vic) school is discouraging us from sending her even though being on site would be beneficial to her."

"Being able to attend on-site 2 days a week has been very helpful, but my twins and our whole family are still struggling. If the school could have supported them to be able to attend more days that would have been more beneficial."

"Only allowed to attend 2 days a week."

"Despite difficult home circumstances they don't feel comfortable managing him at school at the moment and feel it would be to his detriment."

"(metro) School threatened to call DHHS when I told them I needed him to attend due to his regression last time and family stress."

"The VP rung me to say that my child can go into school to be taught."

"Part-time on-site learning has only just been in place. This was extremely difficult to initiate dialogue with the school regarding the challenges my daughter experiences when learning from home."

"Meant to be learning from home but refusing. We got told he's not vulnerable enough."

"Attendance has made a massive difference."

"Being able to attend 2 days a week on-site has helped tremendously. Despite communication and explanations, the school staff do not seem to understand that he is unable to meet their expectations of joining Microsoft Team meetings while at home."

While we didn't ask about **disengagement from school**, in the comments many indicated their child is not currently doing any schooling.

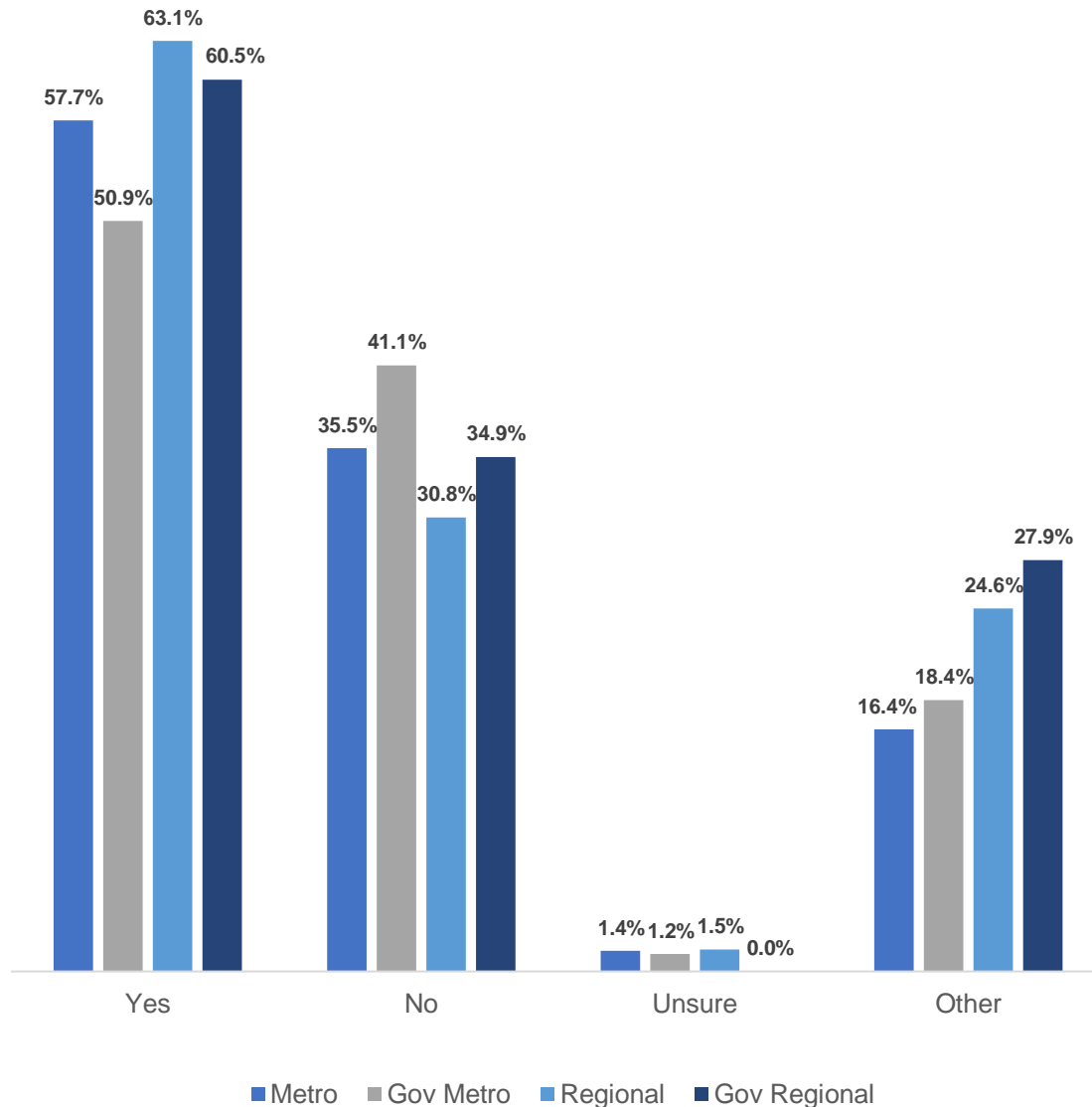
"Refusing to do school work or engage in school."

"My child is at home but not doing any school work. He refuses and anxiety causes meltdowns. And I have 3 kids with autism and can't spend any time helping him."

He won't engage with online learning at all and was not permitted to attend school, even though mother essential worker as he is not toilet trained."

"No school. Not possible to learn from home so no education currently."

Has your child's school contacted you to discuss their individual circumstances and support needs in Term 3?



The survey found around one-third of families have not engaged with their child's school this term to discuss their child's individual circumstances and support needs.

This number was higher in government schools, with 41.4% of metro respondents reporting no contact.

"We have a weekly phone call with the classroom teacher, to discuss and plan the following weeks work."

"I have contacted them on multiple occasions, willing to discuss when I call. But no initiation of contact or preparedness for asd children."

"I have initiated contact and they were very accommodating."

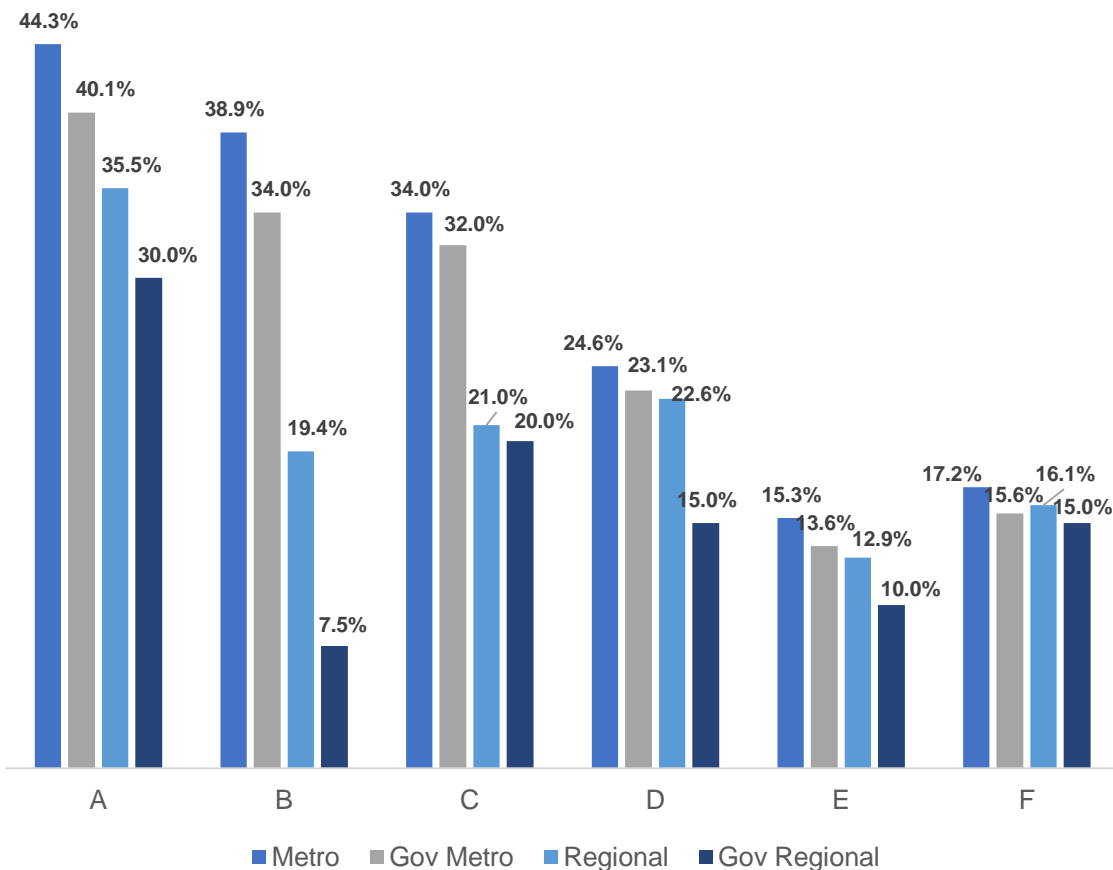
"When I emailed to tell leadership that we were struggling, I got an email offering virtual ed support time, when I replied to say that sounded good, I never heard from them again. It never happened."

"Phone call once during Week 6 following numerous missed Webex sessions."

"The best thing they did was loan a school computer, meaning we had a computer with a microphone that worked."

"I have spoken to them and they are mostly understanding but I have initiated all conversations."

What kind of personalised support (if any) has your child received during Term 3



- A:** Access to a differentiated / modified curriculum
- B:** Personalised or small group contact with education support staff/education aides
- C:** Individualised meetings with teachers e.g. via video conferencing or phone
- D:** Adjustments to teaching approach (e.g. break down of tasks; support for organisation)
- E:** Opportunities for sensory and movement breaks
- F:** Sessions with Student Support Services staff (e.g. mental health support, OT, speech) – including remote/virtual sessions

Personalised support for those undertaking remote learning has been highly variable. Government schools consistently scored more poorly.

“My child has not needed much in the way of extra support and academically is doing very well with remote learning. Teachers at the school are always available for discussions if necessary.”

“The 1:1 teacher google meet ONLY started 2 weeks ago (week 5). Before this no extra support given.”

“The aide funding levels simply do not allow for enough support, especially at this time. The school doesn't have enough training or support for inclusive learning, inclusive equipment or an inclusive environment.”

“All modifications and adaptations have been parent led and remote therapies have been NDIA funded. No contact from aid or modified curriculum.”

“We have not been given any additional support or had anything changed or modified.”

“More support and reasonable adjustments during the day to help him with his work [is needed]. He is mostly left to figure it out on his own which triggers his anxiety hugely.”

“Most curriculum changes and assistance is given by Mum and causing a huge mental load.”

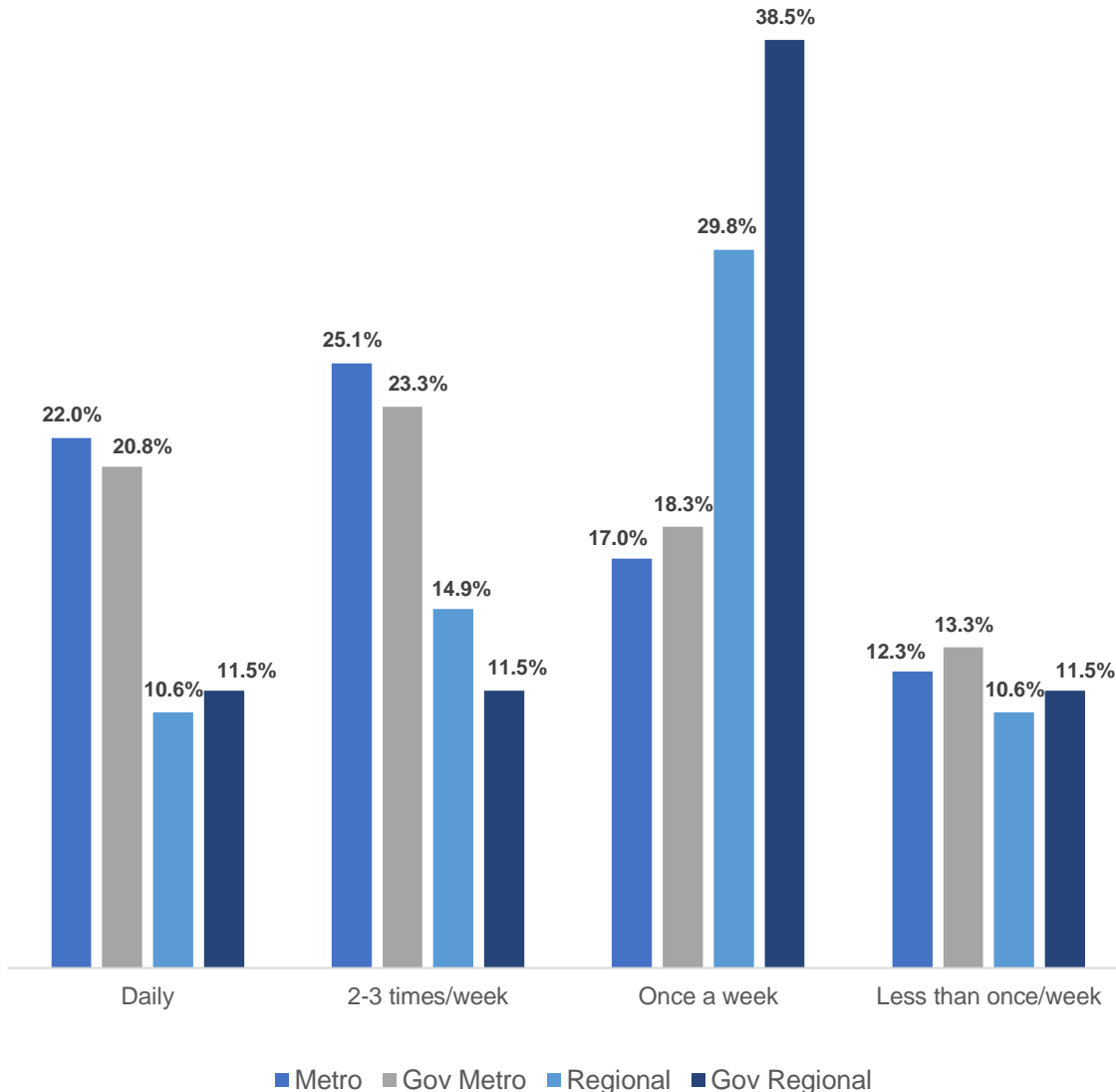
“None, because school said he is not PSD funded.”

Having a teacher and LSO that are so engaging and approachable have helped my son and myself.

“Teacher calls every student once a week – so nothing different from everyone else but still her teacher is doing more than some.”

“Have only been told that if he can't do the work provided it's no big deal.”

If your child has been receiving support from education support staff during Term 3, what has been the frequency of contact?



Access to education aides has been highly variable, but highly valued by those in frequent contact.

"My child has had no individual contact with their classroom aides. They sometimes hop on during a google meet, but do not engage with my child."

"4 days a week, plus reading one on one with a teacher once a week mins."

"After I made a request via email & he will receive help for 30 mins for the next 2 Wednesdays."

"He had a full time ESS, and he has had no contact during term 3."

"He attends 5 to 7 face to face group lessons, one teacher chat session of 20 mins per week."

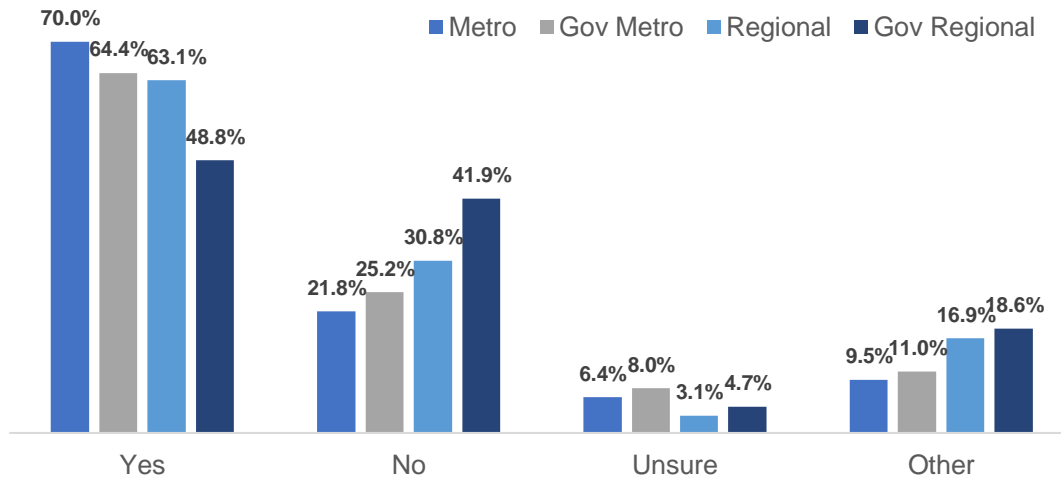
"I have twin boys who both have PSD funding, both normally have an aide each, but they now share an aide via webex and she spends approx. 1.5 hours with them, 4 days a week."

"Focused and individual meetings with teacher or aide would be so beneficial."

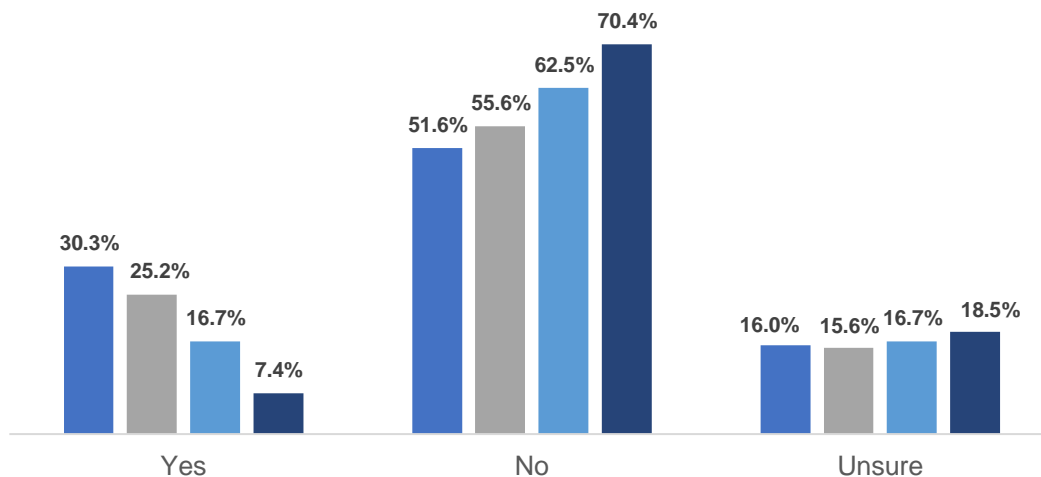
"My son can access the ESO via google classroom anytime between 9-1 when he requires assistance."

"Aid meets through zoom three days for 1 hour."

Does your autistic child have an Individual Learning Plan / Individual Education Plan?



If yes, has this plan been updated to reflect any changes in learning since late March when schooling was disrupted because of Covid19?



A significant proportion of parents reported their autistic child does not have an Individual Education Plan in place. Absence of a plan is more common in government schools, particularly in regional Victoria.

"Although I have asked repeatedly for an IEP to be put in place and to consider adjustments for my daughter, to date, no plan or adjustments are in place."

"I requested a plan and was told by the school that plans were not being developed because children were learning from home."

"[My child] Has just commenced at a new school but did [have an IEP] in a previous school."

"He should have, and we have asked many times for an ILP during the term."

For those with IEPs, the majority advise their plans have not been updated since school disruptions commenced in late March.

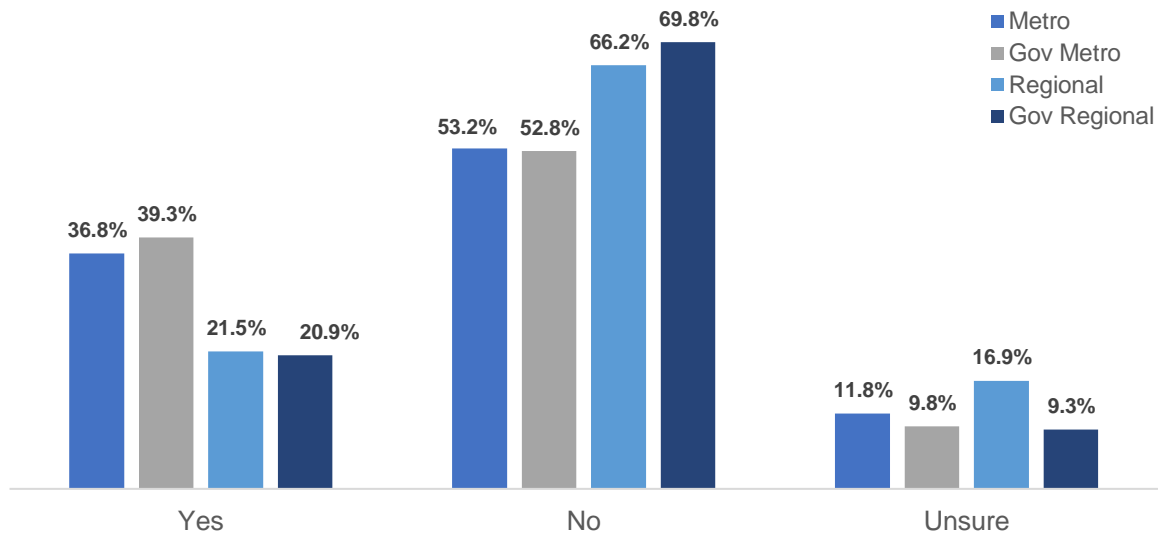
"Changes were just made but only prior to second lockdown."

"My child had an ILP but this was not reviewed and 'dropped' just before COVID in March. I was not told why. I suspect because my child does not receive funding from the education sector so no incentive."

"Our teacher has been fantastic at providing us with a relevant and achievable ILP for home learning."

"Remote learning triggered the need for an individual learning plan."

Does your autistic child have a Student Support Group?

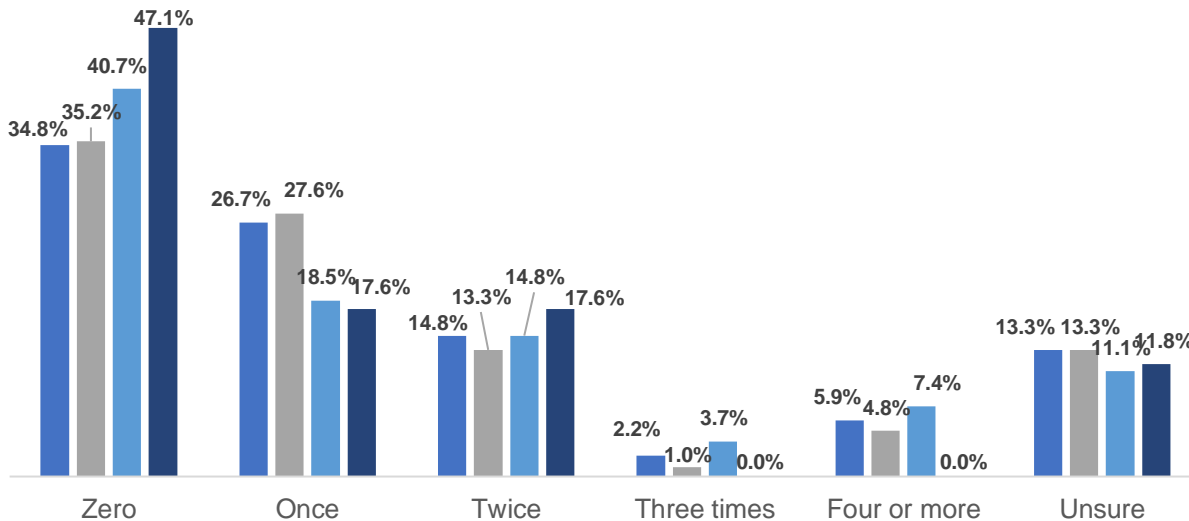


A majority of respondents reported their autistic child does not have a Student Support Group.

"I am so frustrated that schools don't see SSGs as important for kids who don't get PSD funding. All students with learning needs should have this available."

"My SSG meetings are parent teacher interview with just me and the classroom teacher."

If yes, how many times has the Student Support Group met (including virtual and phone meetings) since late March?



For those with SSG's, over one-third reported no meetings have taken place since late March.

"In theory [there was a support group], but his teacher has been absent since the start of Covid19. Replacement teacher is great, but we have not had any meetings."

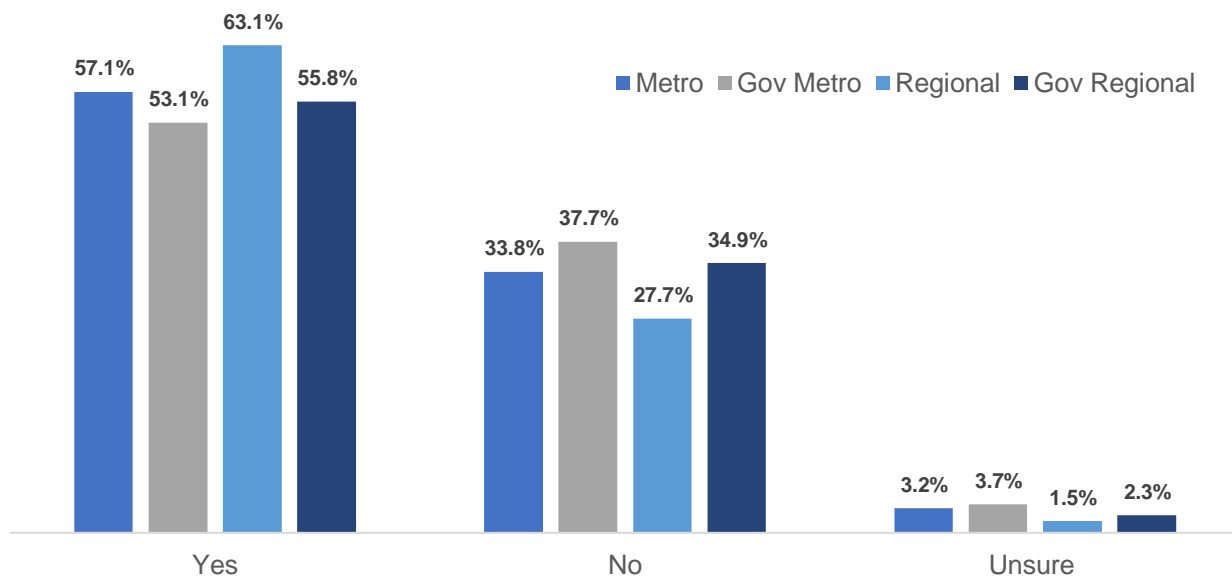
"A generic letter went out offering meetings, but I declined as I am already teaching her as I need to myself."

"They have still done nothing."

"Very disappointing and angry that we have not met since Term 1. These meetings can easily occur online."

"A letter went out offering an SSG meeting"

Has your child remained in contact with or connected with their classmates or peers at school?



Connection to peers has continued for the majority of autistic students, albeit to a limited extent.

Worryingly, around one-third reported their child had been disconnected from their peers.

“Somewhat. Attending some video sessions. Lost contact almost completely with friends.”

“Logs in morning meeting and lunchtime session.”

“Other than brief whole of class video check-ins, my daughter has had limited interaction with peers and classmates until this week when she started part-time onsite learning.”

“First lockdown he attended onsite. Made new friends.”

“Through social media sites for general conversation not school related.”

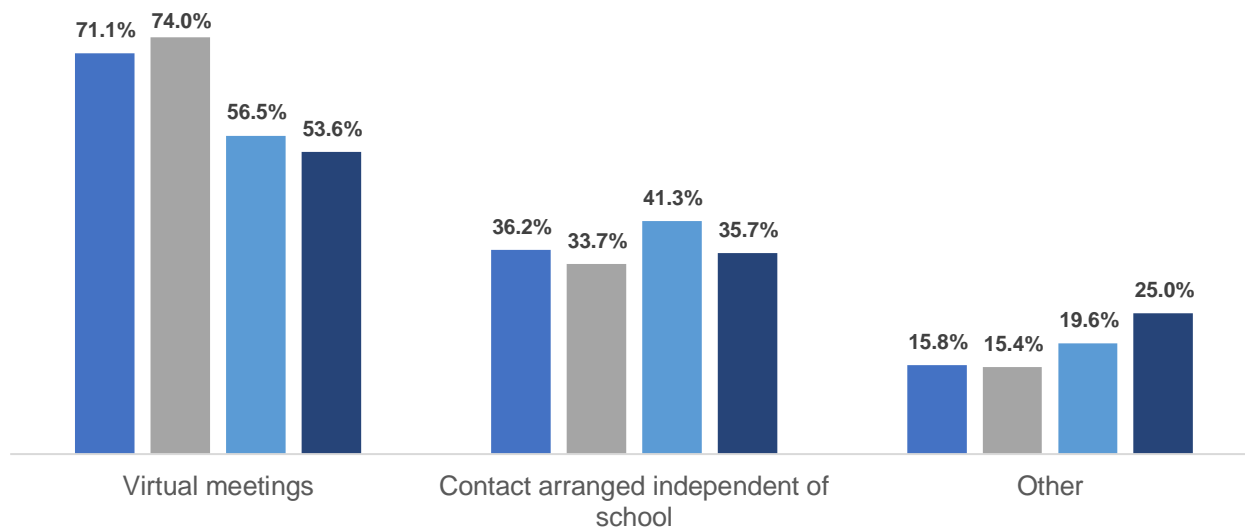
“Friendly Friday chat times 7 to 8 kids for 15 minutes a week.”

“My child has found Webex/remote sessions very difficult/class has shared online gaming usernames so they can connect online but this is challenging too.”

“Socially isolated because struggles to talk with peers.”

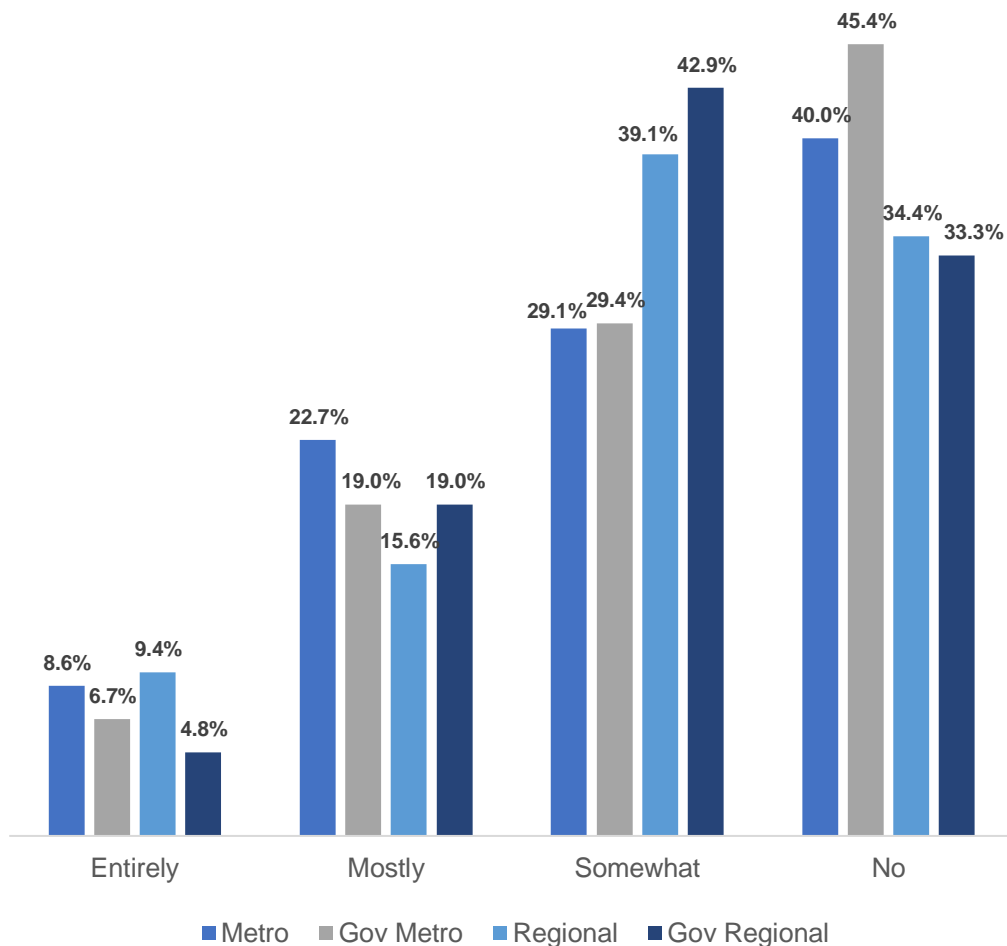
“Play date with another friend from school on a weekend allowed respite for family and sibling.”

If yes, how has this connection taken place?



Has the support provided during Term 3 met your child's needs?

Parents most common response was that support received during Term 3 has not met their child's needs. Metro government schools fared particularly badly. Just 20-30% of respondents (depending on location and setting) report that support is entirely or mostly meeting their child's needs.



"Despite the struggles my son is having, we are very grateful that his school has adjusted their approach and are now offering him supports."

"No support has been in place this Term 3. What would be helpful: Modified and reasonable adjusted tasks and more detail of the schedules of tasks ahead; Direct engagement by support staff to contact my child; Links to and introduction to Online support of Autistic peers."

"Extremely hard to engage children with autism remotely."

"During onsite learning yes, but at home no."

"Struggling, just do what we can to get through 1 day at a time."

"Still a long way to go, but better than the last lockdown where my son was just expected to do what all the other kids were doing, then received negative comments on this first ever school report about his learning during the first lockdown."

"Understanding from the teaching and school staff regarding the challenges my autistic daughter experiences would be helpful. I have been told by teaching staff that my daughter has no issues at school, so it "must be an issue with your home environment"

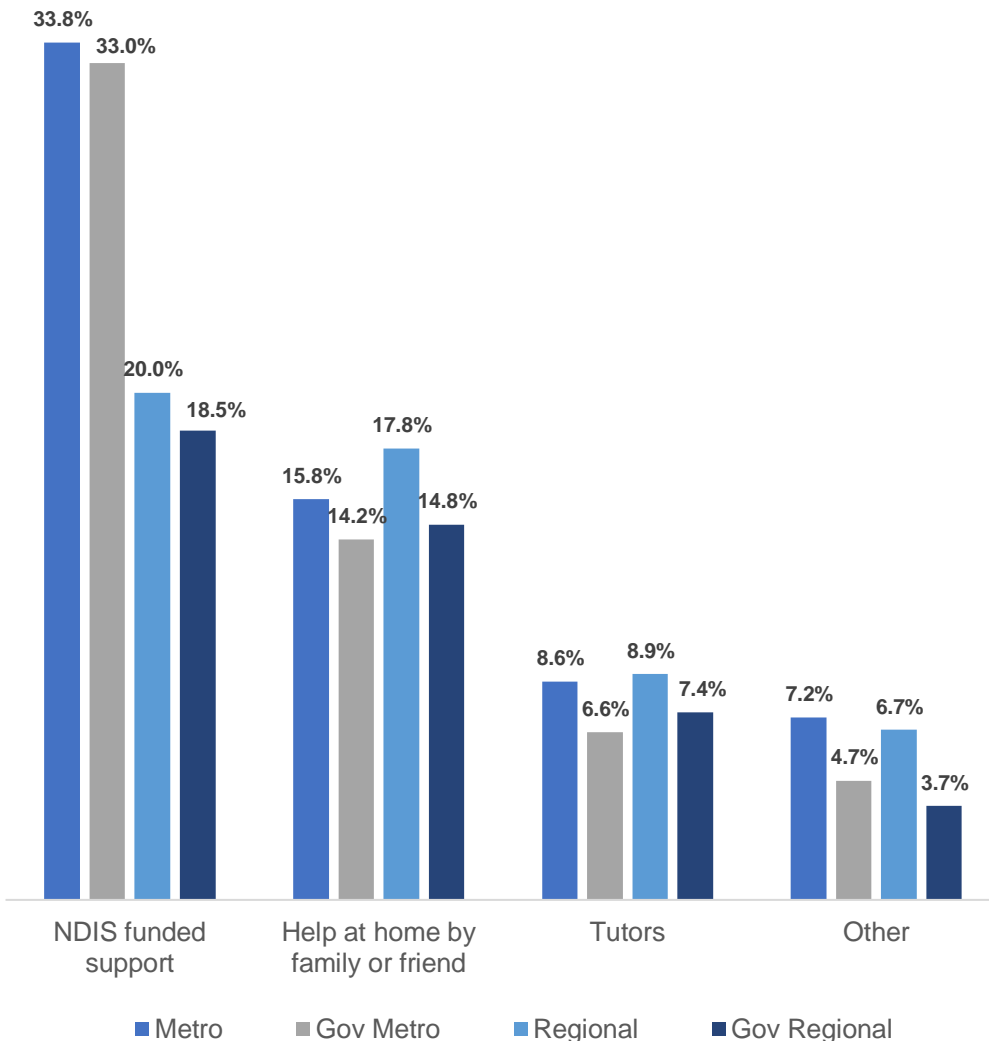
"The teacher runs through the day's work for 15 mins each morning. If the kids don't ask questions then, the teacher assumes all the children know what they are doing. My daughter can't maintain focus let alone absorb that much information at once, so struggles to complete the tasks set for the day. Furthermore, the school has designated Wednesday afternoons and all day Fridays as contact free, so if children have any questions relating to tasks due, no staff are available to answer them."

"Able to attend school currently. However receives no supports due to COVID all services have ceased including Speech & OT therapy and other programs."

On the other hand, some parents report that their child has been doing better at home, than at school.

"Our child is doing much better at home than at school because we can support his needs."

Have you accessed any additional in-home support while your child is learning from home?



The most common form of additional support families have tapped into have been via NDIS, however considerable frustration was expressed about access barriers and the limits of this support.

"We've had no support as our old support worker quit just before the term started and I couldn't introduce a new support worker while my son's emotions and stress levels are so high."

"No funding for this, seeking review of supports as family in crisis."

"Despite being funded for NDIS support, my child's BSP has taken nearly 12 months and is still yet to be sent to NDIA commission. Unable to access support despite having adequate funds to draw from."

"We have NDIS but no core, so we can't access support. We've asked for more help due to Covid and been denied."

"We would normally have occasional access to support from family, but they are in NSW and so the border closure makes that impossible."

"It would help if NDIA got their head around the need for more school hours-based support during periods of online schooling. Just because the child is home does not mean that the parents can supervise like the teachers do. My son learns by vocalizing. He has to repeat everything said and have someone else confirm his understanding is correct. This currently falls as an education task and therefore not suitable for support worker - yet as the parent I am meant to do this, whilst running my business and being the sole bread winner."

"It has been incredibly tough on my son and the rest of the family, most of his other therapies have also stopped as zoom calls are not possible for him, it has impacted his older sisters learning who is in high school."

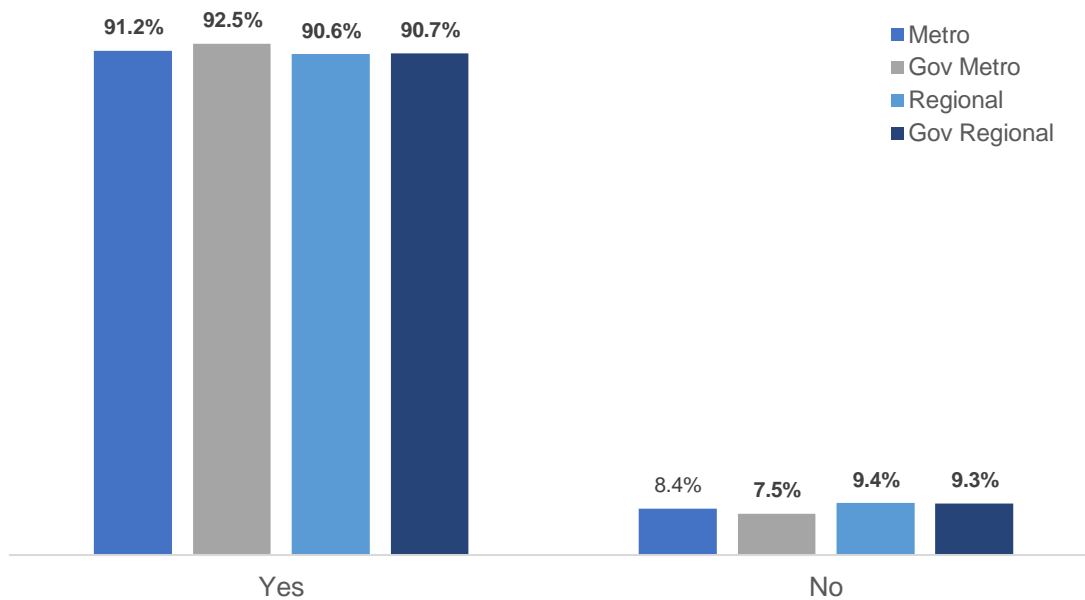
"I personally funded a support worker for 3 hours per day."

"He is thriving having 1:1 support. I think a disability support worker could have given us a break."

"I feel that my child has been unsupported by external frameworks (school, NDIS) throughout this period."

"Speech therapist- private has aided."

Did your child return to on-site schooling in Term 2?



Over 90% of respondents reported their autistic child returned to on-site schooling in Term 2.

While some received personalised assistance to support a positive transition back to school, most didn't.

"Anxiety escalated after positive Covid19 in town. Took a lot of effort to get my child to attend school in the end he just couldn't do it. He was home for 7 weeks with no work from school."

"He tried but anxiety and sensory overload were extreme, so he mostly stayed home or came home early."

We enforced a lead in. Half days first week, 4 days second week. Full days 3rd week. It worked very well."

"I self-funded a support aide."

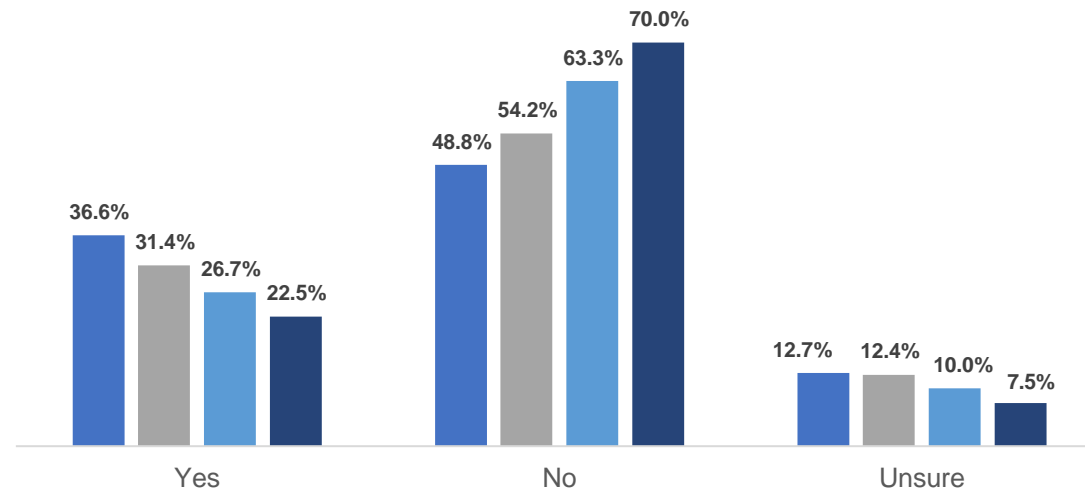
"His aid was at the classroom each morning to ensure transition went well."

"On request, the teacher had a video call to show my child the changes. We provided the teacher a social story to distribute to the entire class, so he wasn't singled out. (All the kids benefit from social stories)."

"It was very difficult to adjust."

"Communication between school and home would have aided me to support my child."

Did the school provide individualised support to assist with their transition back to on-site learning?



If your child did NOT return to school late in Term 2, what was the reason?

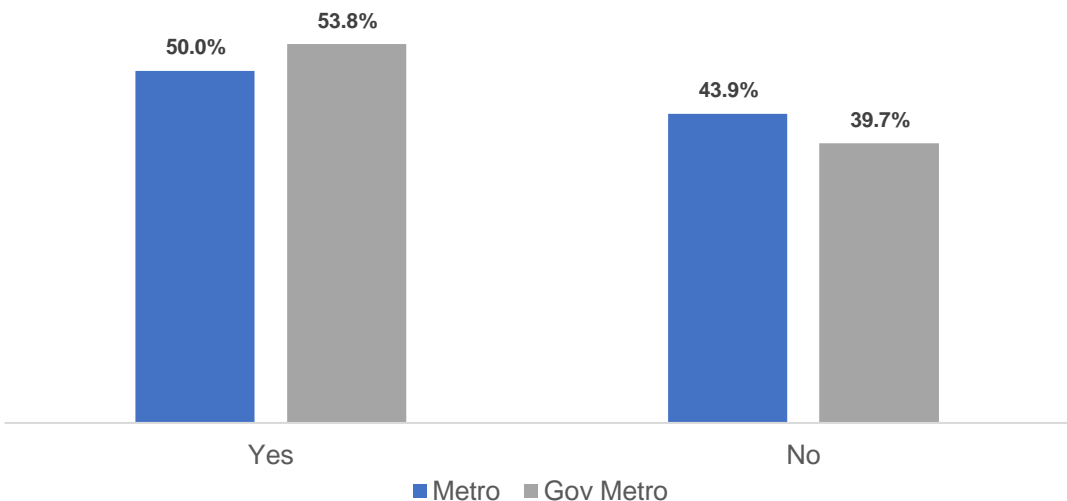
"He was extremely scared of starting and as a parent I wasn't even allowed on the school grounds to support him."

"The transition back to school for only 9 days without any understanding of the daily changes presented too much of a challenge emotionally."

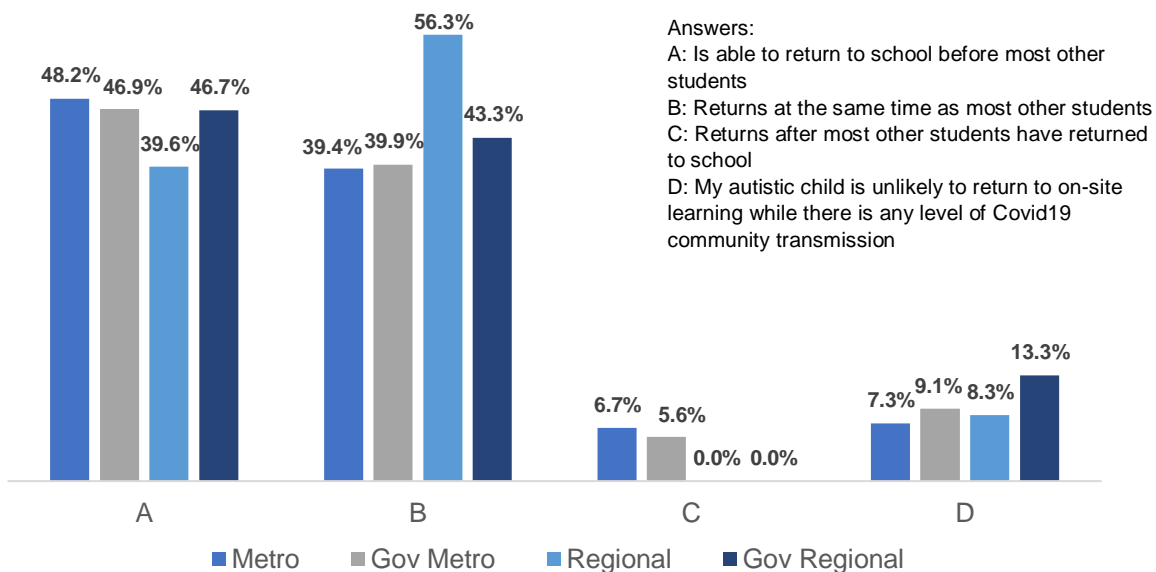
"Too dangerous for vulnerable students with high transmission numbers."

"It's his first year of school and the huge change in his routine has made him more overwhelmed so being at home is a familiar place where he feels safe and less vulnerable."

Did your child attend school at the start of Term 3, when special schools remained open and students with disability had the option to attend mainstream school?



If your child is NOT currently attending on-site schooling what is your preference for returning to school once the Chief Health Officer allows more students to return. Would you prefer that your autistic child ...



Parents on the whole welcomed the choice of sending their autistic child to school in early Term 3, before metro Melbourne went into stage 4 lockdown. Over half took the opportunity to send their child to school.

"2 days a week – worked very well."

"She attended 1 day a week. She was hesitant at first, but she began to look forward to it. Although I was not comfortable sending her every weekday, the one day was great. Her behaviour was much more stable even attending one day over not at all."

"Very helpful academically and gave her a chance to feel normal."

"My child expressed a positive reaction to the smaller number of children in the school."

"School was great but the consequences of trying to home school was extreme behaviour that required increased support from staff. They were fantastic."

"Did not really social distance during breaks."

Nearly half of metro parents are seeking an early return to school for their autistic child. However, around 9% of students will likely need to learn from home while the virus is still circulating in the community.

"It would be ideal if my son started back at school before the other students due to anxiety and sensory overload. To adjust to his surroundings before he feels uncomfortable and out of place again."

"A staggered approach would be best. Alternate days or shorter days to ease transition."

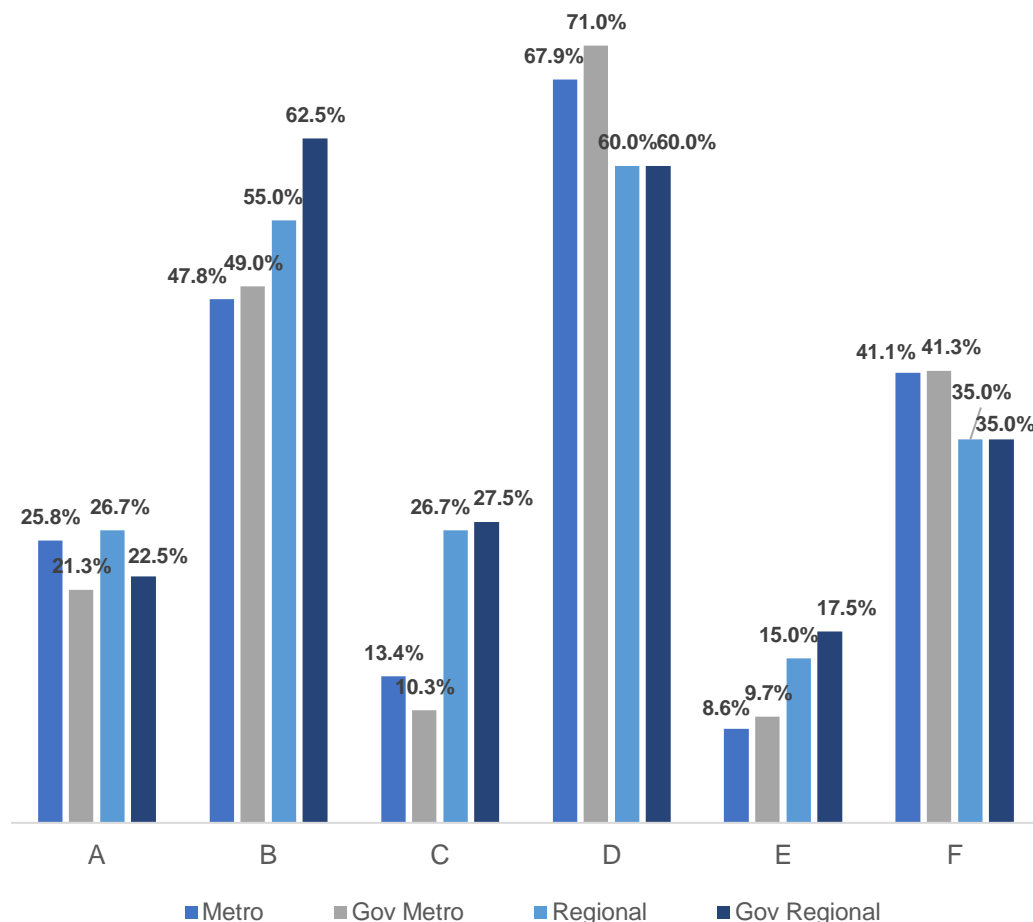
"He needs routine and structure. He is at risk of being disengaged."

"My child will require extra time to readjust to going back to school. The sooner he's back the sooner we can return to his normal schedule to be able to manage his anxiety and school refusal."

"Each child has responded different to distance learning. But for those that are struggling at home, they need to go back to school ASAP, and with some support once they are there. I fear the longer they are kept at home, there will be greater damage to their mental and emotional health."

"If my child catches this and brings it home, I will die. I can't risk it, so he won't be going until it is safe."

Have disruptions to schooling during the coronavirus crisis had any impacts - positive or negative - on your child's learning or wellbeing?



Answers:

- A: My child's learning has improved
- B: My child's learning has not progressed
- C: My child's mental/emotional wellbeing has improved
- D: My child's mental/emotional wellbeing has declined
- E: My child's physical health has improved
- F: My child's physical health has declined

A huge proportion of parents reported their child's mental health and wellbeing has declined during school disruptions. Although some reported positive changes.

"My child has gone from progressing well to self-harming on a daily basis."

"My son is less anxious staying at home."

"Doing remote learning my child has had somewhat less stress by not being in a classroom every day, but is also suffering from the lack of peer friendships."

Around half reported their autistic child's learning has not progressed.

"We are having big problems with screen time addiction and this is really hard to manage when most of his schoolwork is online."

"My child has not been disadvantaged in his learning as the school has done an exceptional job."

"His mindset is 'school is for schoolwork, not home'. It has been a daily struggle getting him to do anything."

Some reported positive progress with remote learning, particularly where parents have been in a position to provide intensive support and an enabling environment. For some, it has highlighted that with the right support, their children are capable learners.

"My child's learning has improved because I sacrificed my work to support her 1-1. It's sad to admit she finally learnt to read and write properly during the first lockdown. She clearly can learn when the right support is offered to her."

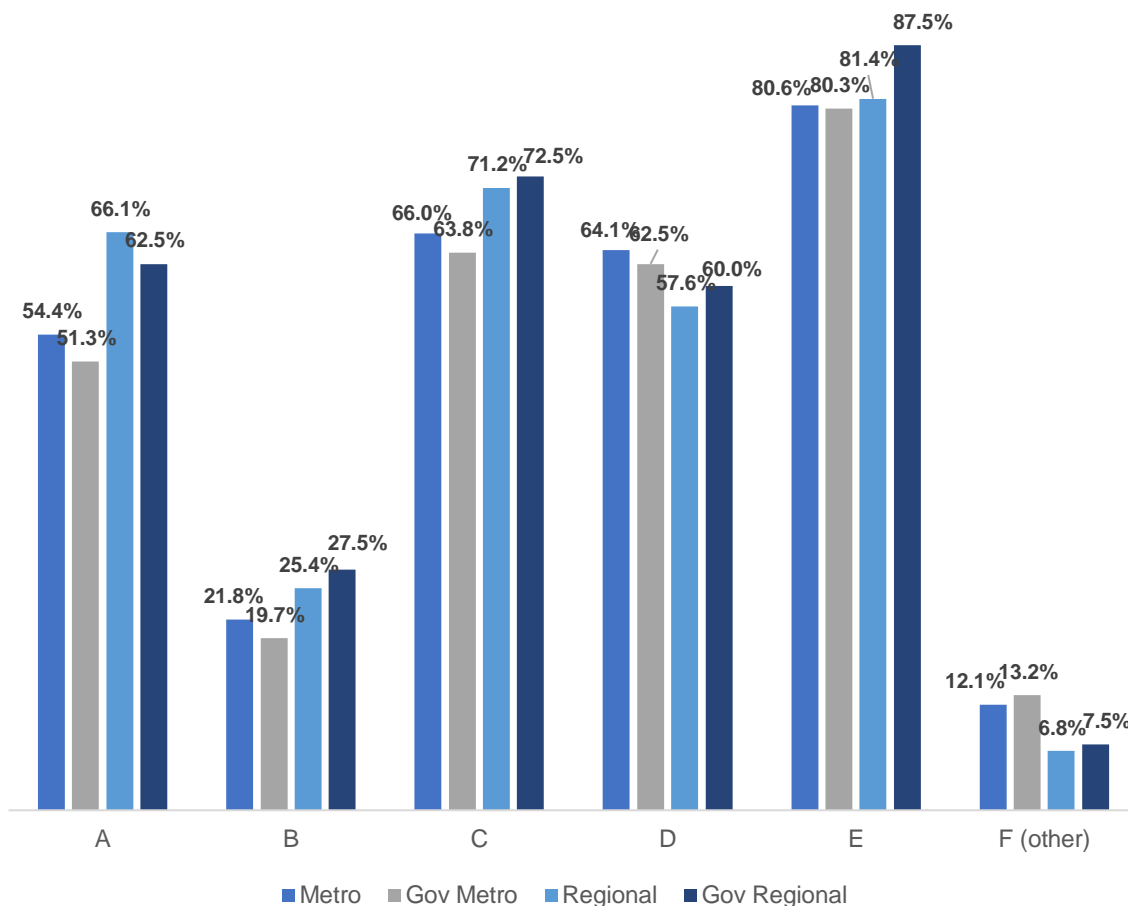
"He is actually doing better at home with less distractions and having a less stressful environment. We have kept a very strict school routine with set times for learning and his school gives clear indications on if each subject period is a online class or independent learning class ... teachers will often check in for individual support during these times. He has also benefited from listening to music at home while studying something he cannot do at school."

"Remote learning has allowed us to be a lot more aware of our child's strengths and weaknesses. One striking realisation has been that he actually understands a lot of the work but is frequently held back at school by difficulty writing, anxiety, poorly modified tasks and difficulty operating in groups."

"Our school thinks my child is incapable of learning and has been sent home at 10 :30 am daily, since the beginning of prep. Home learning is the only time my child has learnt anything."

"I am providing one on one support (constant to complete schoolwork)."

Schooling disruptions during the coronavirus crisis have impacted the learning and well-being of many students across Victoria. What supports would help address these impacts?



Answers:

- A: Targeted catch-up support
- B: Opportunity to undertake an additional term or semester, or even repeat the year
- C: Mental health and wellbeing supports
- D: Assistance to help reconnect with peers
- E: Personalised adjustments and modifications to address my child's strengths and challenges

The need for mental health and wellbeing support, targeted catch-up assistance and strengthened adjustments/modifications were identified by parents to address the impacts of schooling disruptions.

"Distance learning has shown me where her strengths and weaknesses are. A discussion with the school and a plan to help her strengths and weaknesses needs to be developed."

"Funding to engage a tutor in one on one support to make up for lost learning."

"Extra assistance from teachers who understand disabilities and mental health supports."

"Therapists to attend school to generalise and facilitate targeted skill development."

"I think the first 3 to 6 months of next year should be revision of this year."

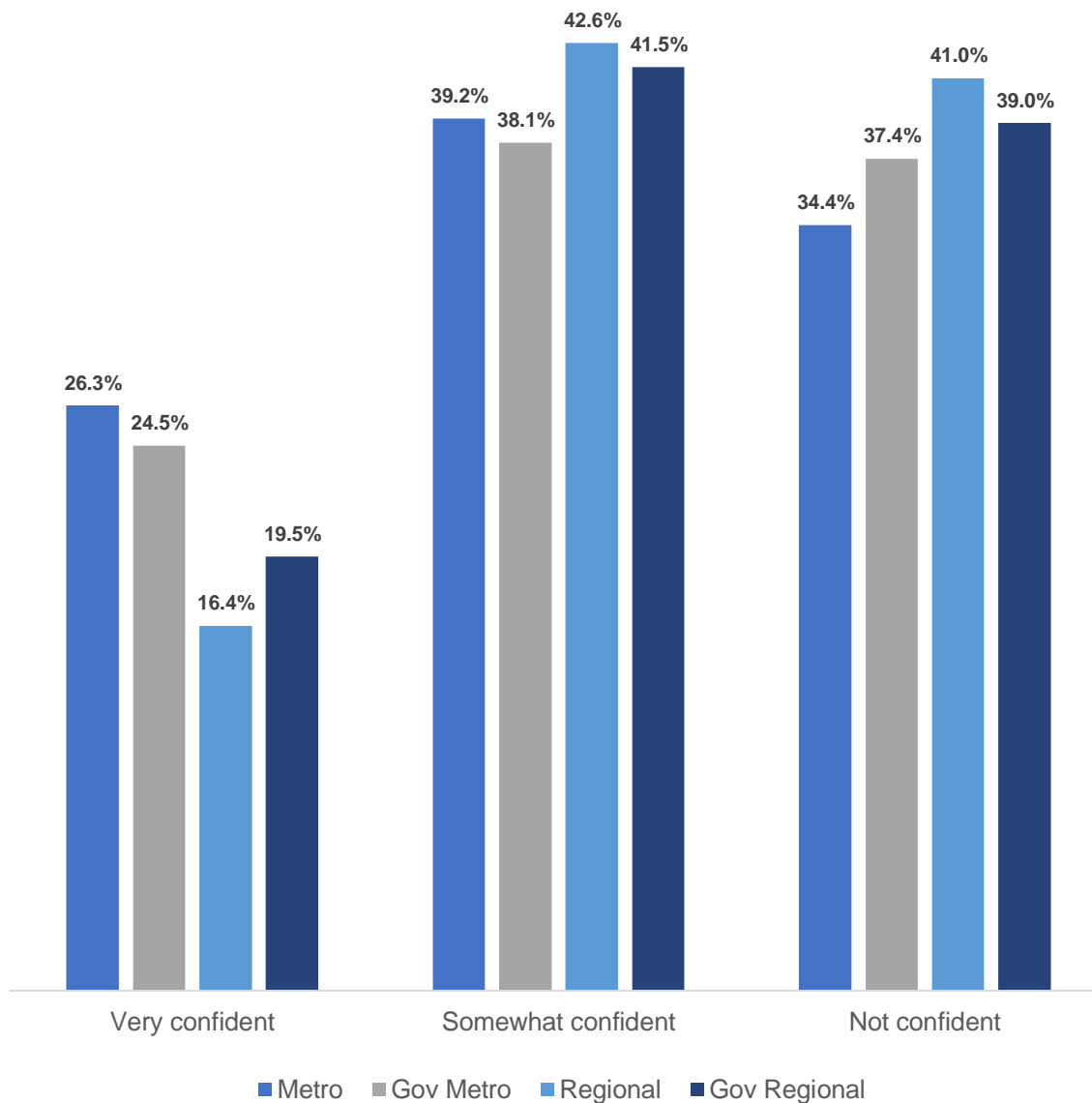
Opportunity for an extra term, semester or year was a strong theme for those at specialist schools in transition years.

"Autistic children have regressed and all the therapy and positive gains and progress they have made is now pointless. It's back to square one. Difficult when my autistic son begins a year 7 next year. No preparation at all. How can this even be possible now?"

"Special developmental students get only one chance at school, my son should be given the opportunity to repeat his year level, the minimal work he has completed is no way near enough to what he would have completed by attending school. To promote him to the next year level is not in his best interests."

"I want to see all current special school students (regardless of year level) given the chance to stay until 19 years old. Currently they all have to leave when they are 18."

How confident are you to ask your child's school to provide additional supports?



Most parents are confident – at least to some extent – to engage with school around their child's needs.

Of concern is that well over one-third of parents of autistic children are not confident to do so.

"When I have asked it's always met with a frown. I feel like the principal and vice (principal) have bigger issues on their hands and my daughter's needs are way down the list. I also feel like the school is very poorly resourced and funded. So their hands are tied financially."

"Past experiences with my older autistic child at the same school make me feel discouraged to seek help."

"School is unwilling to negotiate anything which is disgusting."

"I am confident, but it can be very difficult at times when I am up against a clear misunderstanding of the needs of an Autistic child."

"His individual teacher yes but whole school response had always stated he doesn't meet requirements under the education department for support."

"We have had a hugely negative journey with our school who are incredibly lacking in understanding of autism."

They are a very supportive school bit I feel like I would be a burden if I asked for more."